

*CAPTURING PERSONALIZED, PROACTIVE, PATIENT-DRIVEN CARE ACROSS VHA*


A STORY BY THE VHA OFFICE OF PATIENT CENTERED CARE AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION



**VA**  
HEALTH  
CARE

Defining  
**EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century



A photograph of an older man with grey hair, wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt and blue pants, practicing Tai Chi in a park. He is in a side profile, with his arms extended forward in a graceful, flowing motion. The background is a lush green park with trees and grass, bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The overall mood is peaceful and serene.

*“WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME  
IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS  
HAS REALLY RESTORED MY FAITH.”*

— **THOMAS SELLS**, VIETNAM VETERAN, U.S. ARMY

[ GO TO THE OPCC&CT WEBSITE TO SEE HIS INSPIRING STORY. ]



IN VA — WE VALUE VETERANS AND WHAT VETERANS VALUE

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# THE VISION OF HEALTH FOR LIFE

TO HONOR AMERICA'S VETERANS BY PROVIDING EXCEPTIONAL HEALTH CARE THAT IMPROVES THEIR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING







A NEW VA

When Thomas Sells first approached VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (VA GLA), he was skeptical of its ability to help. Using an integrated approach that addressed Mr. Sells’ pain and ailments from every aspect, his integrative clinical team helped him overcome post-traumatic stress disorder, alcoholism, and chronic back pain. Since 2009, Mr. Sells has had no need to take prescribed pain medication. The program he entered is part of a transformative movement in VA, bringing a new type of care to Veterans and their families. The VA GLA and others like it are pioneering patient centered strategies through a new personalized, proactive, patient-driven approach to health care that helps Veterans like Mr. Sells experience Health for Life.

THE MISSION:  
HONOR AMERICA’S VETERANS

The mission of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is “to honor America’s Veterans by providing exceptional health care that *improves their health and well-being.*” While we do an excellent job of delivering high-quality health care, we know that the current medical paradigm means there are limitations in what our American health care system delivers. In our system, the number of Veterans is growing and demand for health care is increasing. Like the rest of America, we are seeing more chronic diseases, as well as many more Veterans returning to civilian life with serious service-related injuries. The challenges are great and many, and the opportunities are huge. VHA is the largest integrated health care system in the country, and we are committed to advancing health care for our Veterans and for the country.

IN VA – WE VALUE VETERANS

To meet these challenges, VHA leadership has identified as our No. 1 strategic priority “**to provide personalized, proactive, patient-driven health care to our Veterans.**” VHA recognizes that the current United States medical model is not optimally designed to achieve this patient centered approach. Disease care is a critical part of successful care, but it is just one aspect of health and well-being. To succeed, we must transform the current model of health care to put the patient’s mission for health and life at the center of developing a plan for care. Advancing our approach to one that more fully addresses the health and well-being of Veterans will have a broader impact on their lives and the challenges facing them. VHA is working to employ a personalized strategy that considers the Veterans’ unique conditions, their needs, and their values. **In VA, we value Veterans and what Veterans value.** To that end, VA has created Health for Life. The new patient centered approach to care addresses the full range of physical, emotional, mental, social, spiritual, and environmental influences to help Veterans minimize disease, and regain or improve their health.



CHANGING THE CONVERSATION:  
WHAT VETERANS VALUE

We all have our goals and dreams, our reasons for living. We want to be able to hug our grandsons, dance at our niece’s wedding, awaken each day free of pain, run a marathon, or enjoy watching a sunset. Although not all goals are achievable, we believe that exploring what really matters in a Veteran’s life, rediscovering what gives this Veteran a sense of meaning and purpose, is the foundation of patient-driven care. At VA, we want to help each Veteran explore what it means to live life to the fullest, and have one’s health and health care driven by those goals. Health is not simply the absence of illness: Good health enables us to live the lives we want. It is Health for Life.

Patient centered care changes the dialogue from “What is the matter with you?” to “**What matters to you?**”

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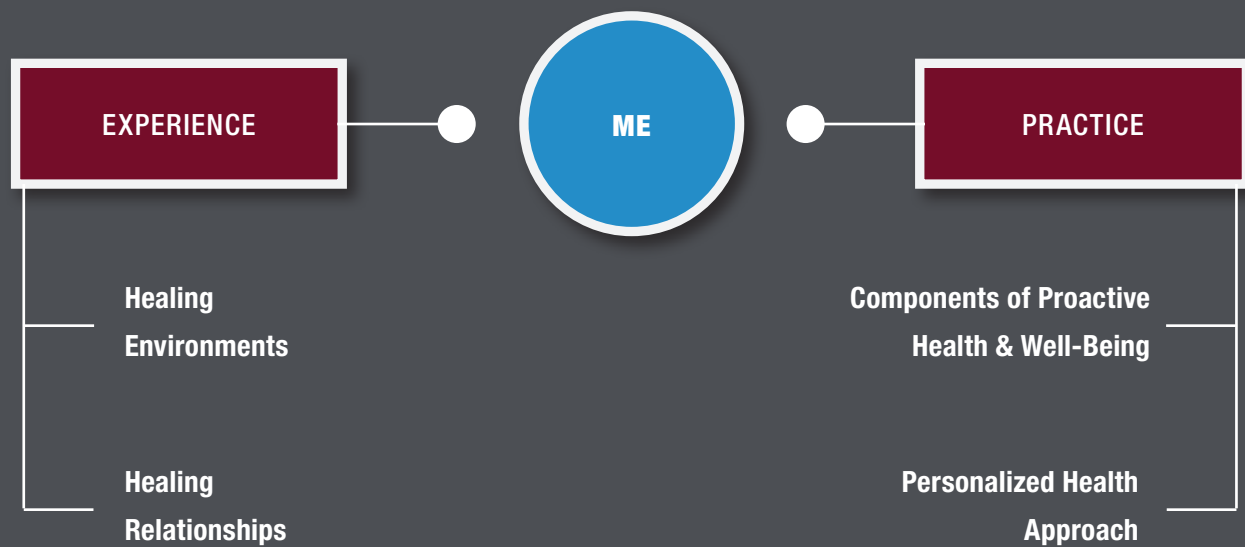
PRACTICING AND EXPERIENCING *HEALTH FOR LIFE*

The Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation (OPCC&CT) is charged with “catalyzing and sustaining cultural transformation in health care for and with Veterans” from a primarily reactive, disease-focused, physician-centered care model to a personalized, proactive, patient-driven approach to health care that prioritizes Veterans and their values, and partners with them to create a personalized strategy that allows them to optimize their well-being and experience Health for Life. To deliver this care, both the practice and the experience of health care must radically change.





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#### CHANGE THE PRACTICE

The “practice” has Veterans at the center, and begins with *their* vision of health and *their* values and goals. It links the Veterans’ personalized health plan to what matters to them in their lives, and it supports them in acquiring the skills and resources they need to succeed in making sustainable changes in their health and life.

#### CHANGE THE EXPERIENCE

A healthy patient “experience” not only builds a positive relationship between Veterans and their care providers; it also has a significant effect on their health and well-being. Developing strong, healing relationships and vibrant, welcoming healing environments supports clinical practice and enhances the patient experience, leading to an improved quality of care, faster healing process, and better outcomes.

### A NATIONAL MOVEMENT: *HEALTH FOR LIFE*

VHA established the OPCC&CT in 2011 under the leadership of Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management William Schoenhard. Dr. Tracy Gaudet M.D. serves as the director for the office. The role of the OPCC&CT is to work with the VHA leadership and the field to transform the organization from a problem-based disease care system to one that is patient centered.





## THE ELEMENTS OF HEALTH FOR LIFE

The OPCC&CT has identified Centers of Innovation, places that are developing, demonstrating, and evaluating patient centered care strategies. From Los Angeles to Birmingham, AL, from North Texas to New Jersey, the established Centers of Innovation are piloting a full range of strategies that support the needs of the patient, placing them in the driver's seat of their own care.

## CENTERS OF INNOVATION

There are five established Centers of Innovation in Birmingham, AL; Los Angeles; North Texas; New Jersey; and Washington, DC. Four emerging Centers of Innovation are building new medical centers in Denver, Las Vegas, Orlando, and New Orleans. These sites are creating patient centered health care systems from the ground up, complete with integrated healing environments and the full capacity to support patient-focused clinical practice.

In addition to these facilities, leaders, staff, and clinicians across the country are working every day to develop innovative strategies to provide personalized approaches to enhance Veterans' overall health and well-being.

## PARTNERING FOR A FIT PROGRAM

Supported by a coordinated national effort, every VISN and VAMC has the opportunity to begin its own transformation. The OPCC&CT has Field Implementation Teams (FIT) in four regions to support local efforts to develop and implement new and innovative strategies to transform the practice and experience of care. FIT partners work with facilities to conduct organizational readiness assessments and to develop personalized comprehensive road maps to enhance the local culture. Using a successful educational curriculum, FIT partners give staff the training and support to help transform care in their facility. FIT partners launched foundational field implementation throughout the country in 2012. During the year, FIT teams provided on-site support to more than 35 field facilities including a host of new engagements.



## THE ELEMENTS OF *HEALTH FOR LIFE*



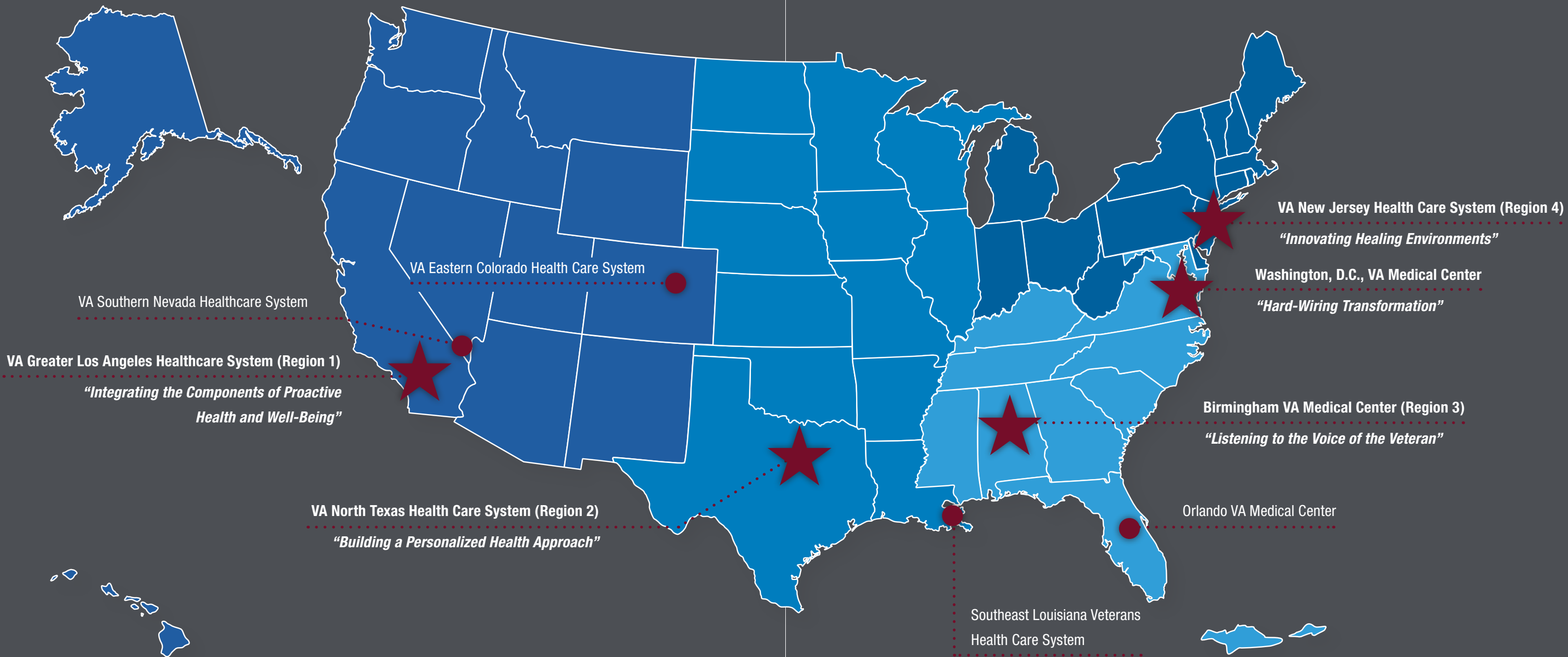


PATIENT CENTERED CARE  
CENTERS OF INNOVATION:  
PLANNING THE FUTURE OF CARE

MAP KEY

**Established Centers of Innovation**

**Emerging Centers of Innovation**







**Working Your Body; Energy & Flexibility:** Tai chi, breathing, relaxation, and stress-reduction classes give patients an integrative approach to healing that complements conventional clinical care. These classes can replace medication for Veterans like Thomas Sells, who find they can manage their pain through mental and physical training.

**Surroundings; Physical & Emotional:** The VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare Center (VA GLA) has re-created natural environments that promote healing. Rooms bright with natural light and furnishings and welcoming inpatient units make for a setting that lowers stress levels and enables the body to focus on its own care. The Women Veterans Historic Rose Garden gives patients a warm place to relax and focus on healing.

**Personal Development; Personal Life & Work Life:** Health coaches, now a part of the Homeless Patient Aligned Care Team, help patients in developing a balance in all of the factors in their personal life, which allows them to achieve their personal health goals.

**Food & Drink; Nourishing & Fueling:** VA GLA offers expanded nutrition classes, a demonstration kitchen, and diabetes education classes. By having the tools to develop healthy eating habits, patients experience a healthier lifestyle that lowers incidences of obesity, heart disease, and stroke.

**Recharge; Rest & Sleep:** Patients experiencing sleep problems from stress and anxiety receive clinical guidance on stress reduction, good sleeping habits, and ways to ameliorate symptoms. Sleeping chairs in inpatient rooms allow visitors to stay well-rested and comfortable while staying with their loved ones.

**Family; Friends & Co-workers; Listening & Being Heard:** VA GLA's newly established Office of Patient Experience developed a Patient Advocacy Program and Veteran Experience Teams that give Veterans and their family members proactive input in the center's patient services.

**Spirit & Soul; Growing & Connecting:** Train-the-Trainer programs have trained more than 750 staff in stress management and compassion. Staff members have resources to address any problems a patient might have and to refer patients to any specialists, such as a chaplain or addiction services.

**Power of the Mind; Relaxing & Healing:** A full-time psychologist offers mindfulness in recovery programs for patients in the Addiction Behaviors Clinic and trains clinical staff in mindfulness. Using a grant from a program that funds VHA innovation, the facility hosts eight clinics weekly. In addition, the facility has developed a program in guided imagery for stress reduction and pain management pre- and post-operatively. Patients in these programs report reduced stress, depression, and anxiety.

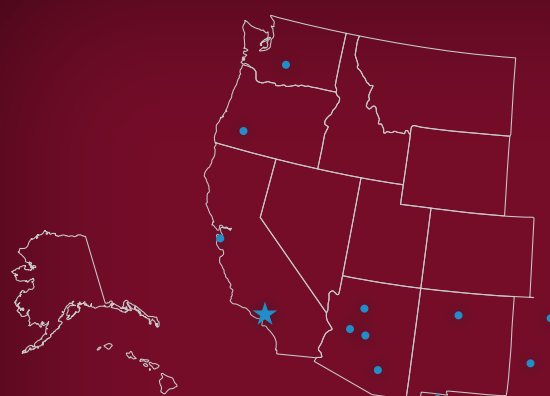
To learn more about their Center of Innovation go to the OPCC&CT website.

## THE COMPONENTS OF PROACTIVE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

REGION 1 (VISNS 18, 19, 20, 21, 22)  
VA GREATER LOS ANGELES HEALTHCARE SYSTEM, CENTER OF INNOVATION

**FIT Engagements:** Roseburg, VA Northern California, Phoenix, Northern Arizona, Southern Arizona, New Mexico, West Texas, Amarillo

Patient centered care supports the patients' efforts to fulfill all components of their health and well-being. With mindful awareness of themselves and these eight components, clinicians and patients can create a personalized health approach that combines professional clinical care, self-care, and community support to build whole health care. The VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System has instituted programs that incorporate all of these components in a personalized, proactive, patient-driven approach to care.



### MAP KEY

- ★ VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System
- FIT Engagements in Region 1





MAP KEY

- ★ VA North Texas Health Care System
- FIT Engagements in Region 2



## A PERSONALIZED HEALTH APPROACH

REGION 2 (VISNS 12, 15, 16, 17, AND 23)

VA NORTH TEXAS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM, CENTER OF INNOVATION

**FIT Engagements:** Sioux Falls, Central Iowa, Little Rock, Jesse Brown, Texas Valley Postal Bend

A patient's journey to well-being begins not with his or her injury or illness but with his or her goals. An injury is not a problem to be fixed; it is a challenge on the road to reaching our objectives.

The personalized health plan combines the technical expertise and specialized knowledge of a dedicated clinical team with the voice of the Veteran, allowing the team to put together a health approach that achieves the Veteran's goals for health and well-being.

- The resulting personalized health plan lays out all of the elements of care that will aid the Veteran on his path to health and healing.
- Together with the Veteran, the team can select the strategies and treatments that best match the patient's unique condition, needs, values, and circumstances.
- The personalized health plan integrates dedicated patient teams into the healing process using a formal process of exploring values and setting

goals and constant reassessment from all members of the team, first and foremost the patients themselves.

- The VA North Texas Health Care System (VANTHCS) now offers integrative therapies to Veterans including music and art therapies and tai chi.

VANTHCS captures real-time family and Veteran feedback on programs including telemetry, day surgery, ambulatory care, and the discharge center. The unprecedented input from patients ensures that services adapt to the patients' ever-changing needs at a systemic as well as personal level.

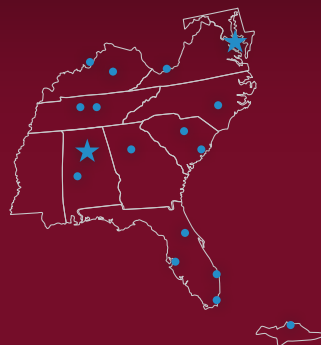
To learn more about their Center of Innovation go to the OPCC&CT website.





MAP KEY

- ★ Birmingham, AL, VA Medical Center
- FIT Engagements in Region 3



## HEALING RELATIONSHIPS

REGION 3 (VISNS 5, 6, 7, 8, AND 9)  
BIRMINGHAM, AL, VA MEDICAL CENTER, CENTER OF INNOVATION

**FIT Engagements:** Lexington, Tennessee Valley, Fayetteville, San Juan, Columbia, Tuscaloosa, West Palm Beach

A core tenet of patient centered care is having strong partnerships with patients and care providers and all employees. With more than 61,000 Veterans served in 2012, the Birmingham VA Medical Center (VA BHM) in Alabama emphasizes the unique relationship each patient has with his or her care provider.

- Birmingham has identified Veteran and family members who serve as advisors and work directly with facility leadership and staff to make sure the perspective of Veterans is included in decision-making.
- Veteran/family advisors participate in committee meetings and are involved in all aspects of the organization, from renovation projects to policy development.
- Veteran/family advisors participate in educational forums, town hall meetings, and community events to ensure the voice of the Veteran is always the central focus.
- In 2010, the Birmingham VA Medical Center piloted an Interactive Patient Care System, which allowed Veterans access to social media. The system allows

Veterans to stay in touch with friends and family, and allows staff to interact with the Veterans and provide education and ongoing feedback during their stay. The medical center used the innovative system to monitor pain levels, resulting in significantly increased pain management according to patients.

- Through Connect2Recovery, a pilot program that gives cellphones to Veterans at high risk of suicide, help is always a phone call away. By supplying Veterans immediate assistance and ongoing relationships with mental health specialists, support groups, and family members, the program has greatly reduced the need for emergency room visits and inpatient mental health stays and improved the quality of life and care for countless Veterans.
- VA BHM is developing an Integrative Health Coaching program to teach health care professionals the best ways to help Veterans explore what matters to them, set health goals, and achieve them.

To learn more about their Center of Innovation go to the OPCC&CT website.





The New Jersey Health Care System has created an environment in which patients are released from the stresses they may be experiencing. For many, the VA medical centers in East Orange and Lyons, NJ, are refuges where they can recover from the challenging circumstances that caused their mental or physical illnesses.

- The new VA Wellness Center combines primary care and mental health services with integrative health options for Veterans.
- Safe and welcoming spaces to heal allow them to feel at home while they engage in a proactive approach to healing. Patients in a positive mental state heal more quickly and have better outcomes.
- New Jersey's landmark greenhouse project brings community and environment together in master gardening classes, where Veterans work together to cultivate gardens, helping them overcome the symptoms of stress and anxiety associated with addiction and post-traumatic stress disorder.

- Renovated and re-imagined patient rooms are part of this healing environment.
- Recliners and flat-screen TVs increase comfort and create a home away from home, aiding the recovery process.
- Healing touch, massage, aromatherapy, mindfulness meditation, yoga, and tai chi are offered to enhance the patient's healing process.
- Meditation and mindfulness programs provide ways for patients to manage symptoms of illness. Meditation in a healing environment can reduce pain and increases the relaxation response, which promotes comfort and healing.
- An open atrium welcomes patients to a friendly environment that provides a lower-stress alternative to the sterility of a waiting room.
- A rooftop garden and outdoor chapel provide quiet spaces for prayer or meditation that allow patients to re-center.

MAP KEY

- ★ VA New Jersey Health Care System
- FIT Engagements in Region 4



HEALING ENVIRONMENTS

REGION 4 (VISNS 1, 2, 3, 4, 10, AND 11)  
VA NEW JERSEY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM, CENTER OF INNOVATION

**FIT Engagements:** Battle Creek, Erie, Wilkes-Barre, Philadelphia, Connecticut, Providence, Boston, Bedford, Manchester, Maine





## THE FUTURE OF *HEALTH FOR LIFE*



### SUPPORTING TRANSFORMATION

In 2009, Thurston Mangrum was a 70-year-old Air Force Veteran who came to the VA New Jersey Health Care System for substance abuse treatment. When stress overwhelmed him, a VA psychologist and a work restoration coordinator guided him toward gardening as a way to relieve his symptoms and help him refocus on turning his life around. They wanted to bring that experience to others at the medical center in New Jersey and, supported by his clinical team and an urban gardener, they established a greenhouse and master gardener program. The program brings together patients who are isolated by their treatment to work on positive, achievable goals. Using gardening in concert with other VA programs, Mr. Mangrum and many others have been able to overcome their substance abuse and thrive in a healing environment.

*“It’s given me a chance to get out, work with others, grow something and do something that’s right, not just for myself but for the whole community.”*

– **Reginald Mourning**, Veteran and master gardener





Across the country, specialists, clinicians, and Veterans are working together to develop innovative programs and treatments that empower patients to take control of their health. With coordinated national support, these programs can get the resources they need to flourish and serve as bright spots for other medical centers.

Over the last two years, the Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation has supported these efforts with more than \$55 million in VHA innovation grant funding for the advancement of patient centered care. These grants have been provided in each of the 21 Veterans Integrated Service Networks and to 85 facilities providing the support they need to build groundbreaking programs. The OPCC&CT is working with these medical centers to measure the outcomes of their projects and to identify those initiatives that have had the greatest impact on cultural transformation. Palo Alto, Madison, and VISN 7 are examples of organizations that have utilized Patient Centered Care Innovation Grant Funding to develop impactful initiatives.

- The VA Palo Alto, CA, Health Care System has a simulation lab to train staff. It used innovation grant funding to develop new training modules using Veterans and family members as actors to enhance nurse and staff communication.

- The Madison, WI, William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital developed an interactive multimedia DVD that provides didactic training for providers in the skills of Veteran-centered care, emphasizing communications, shared decision-making, and partnership.
- The VA Southeast Network/VISN 7 used innovation grant funding to develop patient centered educational curricula for resident and M.D. training, nurse training, and new employee orientation.

Go to the OPCC&CT website to learn more about the strong practices develop through the innovation grants.

#### VETERAN EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

The transformation of the National Veteran Service and Advocacy Program to a more proactive Veteran Experience Program began through the engagement and education of the field Patient Advocates. Pilot projects have been launched to study different models for aligning and integrating the Veteran Experience Program at the local, VISN, and national levels. Go to the OPCC&CT website to learn more about the Veteran Experience Program.

## HARD-WIRING TRANSFORMATION

Patient centered care makes use of cutting-edge medical information technology to empower patients and clinicians to connect with resources and communicate effectively. Using the office's dedicated intranet site, clinicians and doctors have easy access to a comprehensive library of resources supporting the patient centered care model from anywhere within VA.

At facilities like the Washington, DC, VA Medical Center, clinicians have used innovation funding to develop a mobile app to coordinate with patients outside of the office, enabling more consistent and interactive care. The app allows patients to update clinicians in real time and access personalized health information between clinical visits.

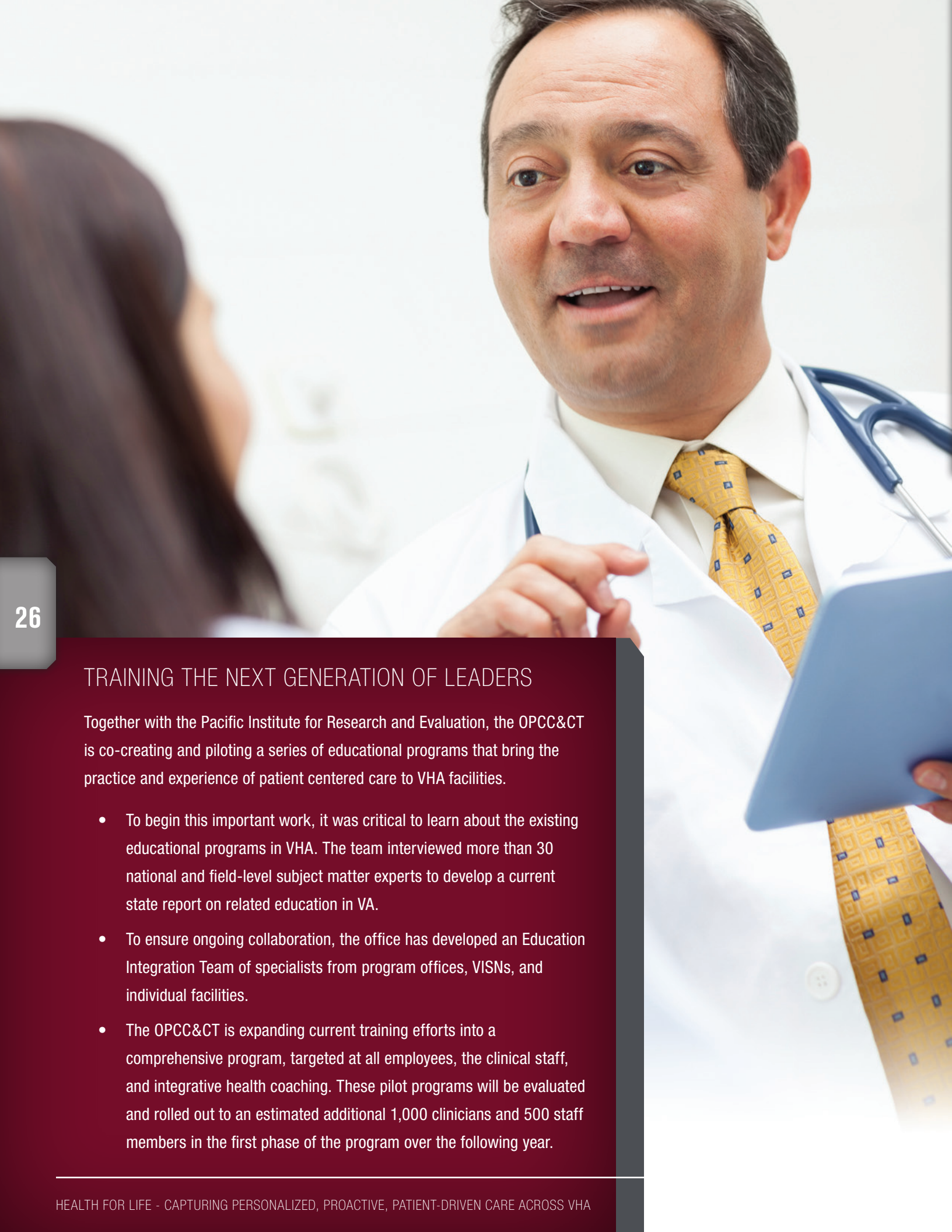
## MOVING FORWARD

In the last several years, patient centered care has grown organically, driven by the innovative programs developed

and implemented by clinicians, managers, and patients. The role of the Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation is to help clearly define the future state of health care, to provide the tools and support the field needs to make it happen, and to help identify and remove barriers to success. By connecting innovators at VA medical centers across the country, successful programs can be brought into the spotlight and replicated across VA.

As patient centered care is disseminated across VA, the Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation will continue to work with medical centers everywhere to explore, demonstrate, and research the best ways to make health care truly personalized, proactive, and patient-driven and to educate our workforce in how to do this most effectively. With your help, we can put the Veteran's mission for health and well-being at the center of the best care anywhere.





## TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS

Together with the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, the OPCC&CT is co-creating and piloting a series of educational programs that bring the practice and experience of patient centered care to VHA facilities.

- To begin this important work, it was critical to learn about the existing educational programs in VHA. The team interviewed more than 30 national and field-level subject matter experts to develop a current state report on related education in VA.
- To ensure ongoing collaboration, the office has developed an Education Integration Team of specialists from program offices, VISNs, and individual facilities.
- The OPCC&CT is expanding current training efforts into a comprehensive program, targeted at all employees, the clinical staff, and integrative health coaching. These pilot programs will be evaluated and rolled out to an estimated additional 1,000 clinicians and 500 staff members in the first phase of the program over the following year.



### FOUNDATIONAL PROGRAM

The Foundational Program is a modular training that introduces all staff in a VHA hospital to proactive, personalized, patient-driven care. The full suite of training materials allows facilities to identify and package the areas of training that are most needed to support their staff and patients in understanding personalized, proactive, patient-driven care, and how it is essential to Veterans' treatment. Training includes:

- Mindfulness
- Components of proactive health and well-being
- Implementing patient centered care locally
- Creating healing environments
- Storytelling and journaling
- Talking points for new employee orientation
- Supervisor tips

A supplementary half-day training gives leadership a hands-on experience with Health for Life and introduces the leadership principles and change theory of patient centered care.

### CLINICAL PROGRAM

The Clinical Program is an experiential training that will be designed and piloted with health care team members. The training leads participants through an exercise in developing a personal mission; creating personalized health plans that address proactive strategies that extend beyond conventional medicine with patients for change; and exploring the challenges and benefits of incorporating patient centered care into practice. This education will build on the excellent training already provided by the Employee Education System, Patient Care Services, Patient Aligned Care Teams, and the National Center for Health Promotion & Disease Prevention.

### INTEGRATIVE HEALTH COACHING PROGRAM

The Integrative Health Coaching program is a small group training that teaches staff how to work with Veterans to develop a personal mission statement, prepare and plan for action, and execute their personal health plan based on their individual mission and values. Personal health coaches will practice these skills under supervision over two three-day sessions.



## RESEARCHING THE IMPACT

The OPCC&CT has partnered with Health Services Research and Development on a number of projects aimed at evaluating the success and impact of patient centered initiatives.

- The OPCC&CT worked with the Evidence-based Synthesis Program (ESP) in Portland, OR, to develop a compendium of research related to patient centered care in VA. This compendium showcases the great work taking place across VA and makes it accessible by organizing it in one database. Go to the OPCC&CT website to see the compendium of research.
- Another project under way analyzes and develops the metrics related to personalized, proactive, patient-driven care to assist medical centers in measuring their progress toward developing a patient centered culture.
- Two Quality Enhancement Research Initiative programs (Hines and Bedford) are evaluating the success and impact of patient centered initiatives using scientific methods. This research will inform decisions on how best to enhance the patient centered culture and approach to care.
- In addition, the ESP in Greater Los Angeles is building an Integrative Therapy Heat Map. This project will analyze the literature on stress reduction based on yoga, tai chi, acupuncture, and mindfulness. The map will illustrate the evidence to support the use of these therapies in addressing specific symptoms affecting Veterans.



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The OPCC&CT leadership team comprises:

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*CHANGE THE EXPERIENCE.  
EXPERIENCE THE CHANGE.*

Health  
for Life 



# Health for Life

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**VA**  
HEALTH  
CARE

Defining  
**EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century